



**AoA Older Americans Month 2008 Program Champion**

**Project:** Arthritis Foundation Self Help Program and Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program

**Organization:** Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging

**Project Description**

Through a collaborative venture with the Nebraska Arthritis Program, the Nebraska State Unit on Aging, and the Arthritis Foundation, Nebraska Chapter, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging is providing self-management and physical activity programming that benefits people with arthritis.

A staff person at Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging has received training in the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Program (AFSHP) and the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (AFEP). Classes are being offered at local senior centers and churches in the BRAAA planning and service area. BRAAA service area is rural, with four of the eight counties in their planning and service area deemed frontier.

The training promotes early diagnosis and treatment and helps people self-manage pain and experience increased functionality. As a result, people with arthritis discover that their condition doesn't have to come between them and the joy of living. To date, 48 individuals have received either the AFSHP or AFEP. The program is receiving high marks from participants. One participant noted "I've gone from walking around the block, to one or two blocks, to one or two miles three times a week. I could've done it on my own and didn't until I joined the group. I recommend these classes to anyone."

By working through the BRAAA and their related senior centers, the Nebraska Arthritis Program and the Nebraska State Unit on Aging have been able to provide the AFSEP and AFEP as routine offerings in local community settings, thereby enhancing both reach and maintenance of AFSEP and AFEP.

For more information on the Nebraska programs contact Kathy Erickson, Choices Unit Supervisor at (402) 223-1352 or via e-mail at [kathy.erickson@dhhs.ne.gov](mailto:kathy.erickson@dhhs.ne.gov)